Respond to the Issue for Part 4

Taking Action: Canadian National Identity

In the last four chapters you have been investigating and considering aspects of the Main Issue for Part 4: ***To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?*** A key goal of Social Studies is to provide you with knowledge and skills that will allow you to address your role as a responsible and active citizen. This means having the opportunity to engage in the democratic process and being empowered to bring about change when necessary in your world. In this project you will consider how nationalism is promoted and displayed in your community and nation, and develop a plan for promoting a vision of the nation.

Planning

Exploring Nationalism in Your Community

In a small group, explore expressions of nationalism in your community. Discuss the various understandings of nationalism. Which understandings resonate most with you? Examine various media to consider how nationalism has been expressed in the past and how it is currently expressed and promoted. The type of media you examine may shape the understanding of nationalism that is most visible:

- National magazines or television may emphasize *civic* nationalism.
- Community newspapers may portray *ethnic* or *linguistic* nationalism.
- A *religious* sense of "we-ness" may be promoted by bodies such as religious organizations.
- Historical information may present a *cultural* or *civic* understanding of nationalism.
- Major sporting events such as the Olympics may present appeals to a *unifying* sense of nationalism.

Develop a thorough list of expressions of nationalism so you start with an accurate range of perspectives within and outside of your community. Do not limit yourself to contemporary sources. Consider exploring past expressions of nationalism using archives and historical sources to see if you can identify an evolving sense of "we-ness" in your community. Consider interviewing people in your community who can provide first-hand accounts or oral stories about your community's identity.

Creating a Vision for Your Community

Within your group, share the understandings of nation within your community. Discuss how your community could embrace nationalism in the future. Analyze the opportunities and challenges of each understanding of nationalism. This analysis must be much more than a simple pro and con chart. Your analysis should consider factors such as

- understandings of nation and nationalism
- different perspectives on each understanding of nationalism
- how non-members of the nation might respond to the promotion of nationalism
- if this understanding of nationalism promotes collective and individual identity
- the extent to which the vision is inclusive

Select one vision or understanding of nationalism that you think individuals and groups in your community would be most prepared to embrace. Examine this vision from all perspectives to consider possible opportunities and challenges that may arise.

Accessing Community Resources

How could you best promote this vision of nationalism? Develop a rough idea about how you could promote your vision of nationhood in your community. Your plan does not have to be well developed, as its purpose is simply to provide a starting point for conversations with others.

Conduct a brainstorming session to identify people and resources in your community that may have a stake in this vision of nationalism. Try to organize your list by individuals, groups, and government agencies. Assign each member of your group several stakeholders from your list. Contact them to see what insights they can provide regarding the factors you considered earlier, and how they have tried to promote this identity.

Questions Your Plan Should Address

- What understandings of nationalism are expressed and promoted in your community?
- What criteria will you use to determine a desirable vision of nationhood for the future?
- What understanding should, would, or could be embraced in the future?
- What are the opportunities and challenges presented by this vision of nationalism?
- How can your vision of nationalism be promoted? How can it address the opportunities and challenges of unity in Canada?

Refining and Presenting Your Plan

Organize and discuss the information you have gathered from the community resources. Revise your initial ideas about promoting nationalism in your community. Keep in mind the people of your community who may be of assistance if you decide to act on your plan. Your goal should be to develop a plan for promoting a vision of nationalism in your community. See the questions in the sidebar feature that should be addressed by your plan.

Set realistic goals for your plan. Consider using a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) on your plan to examine if it is realistic. Initially, you will present your plan to your classmates using a *panel of experts* format. As you develop your presentation, keep in mind effective strategies for communicating your plan. Decide how you will

- determine what background information to include
- incorporate graphics
- present the information (in an electronic presentation format or a poster presentation?)
- assign roles to each group member
- decide who will answer questions
- record and implement suggestions for improvement

Panel of Experts

Group arrange themselves around the classroom in a way that will allow them to present their plan to their classmates. Each group gives their presentation, remembering to use persuasive language. Classmates develop questions and a critique of the group's plan. After each presentation, classmates should question and criticize the plan, with the goal of helping the presenters refine their plan. Presenters should remain open to new ideas. Some suggested rules for critiquing include:

- For every weakness, offer a strength.
- Critique ideas, not people.
- Offer suggestions, not just criticisms.

Act on Your Plan

Following your presentation and the feedback from your classmates, revise your plan in your group. After you have revised your plan, consider ways you might act on it. As it is the end of the term, it is likely that you do not have much time to take on a major project. However, there are certain actions that can effectively support your vision of nationhood. Your action may be direct or indirect.

Taking *direct action* involves joining and working with an existing organization, or perhaps even starting your own group to take action. Direct action can also mean getting involved in the political process by writing to or meeting with politicians, making presentations at community meetings, or participating in demonstrations. No matter what form of action you decide to take, be informed. Taking action requires making reasoned judgments.

Indirect action involves supporting organizations that are already taking action. Usually, this involves donating money to NGOs such as the Council of Canadians, foundations such as CRB Foundation, or agencies, political parties, think tanks, or institutions. If you decide to act indirectly, thoroughly investigate to whom you are donating money, and how your donation will be used.

Reflect on the Main Issue for Part 4

Now that you have had a chance to develop a plan to take action, consider the Main Issue for Part 4: ***To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?***

After completing this project, consider the following:

- Would you approach the task differently if you were starting over again?
- How did you feel about working to benefit your community?
- Do you think you will take action on issues in the future?
- What actions do you feel most comfortable undertaking?

Reflect on the Key Issue for This Course

Over the course of this text you have explored four Main Issues to help you consider the Key Issue for this course: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?*** There is no simple answer to this issue. You have seen that nationalism provides a sense of "we-ness" that unites people. Nationalism is central to both individual and collective identity. However, you have seen that nationalism presents challenges that affect people in a variety of ways. At the same time, you have investigated the opportunities that nationalism presents to individuals and collectives.

In a small group, spend some time discussing the Key Issue. Use your experiences with nationalism and the projects you completed in this course to give depth and detail to the discussion. Regroup as a class and discuss the Key Issue. Be open-minded. This is a complex issue, and you will likely change your position several times during the discussions.